

More than 2 billion people on Earth are too fat, and doctors are worried

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Shawniece Simpson (left) does calisthenics with others during a group treatment session for obesity inside the Hudson auditorium at the MLK Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center in Los Angeles, California, on July 29, 2013. Photo: Mel Melcon/Los Angeles Times/MCT

A new report says that the world isn't getting smaller. It's getting fatter.

In general, people around the world were fatter in 2013 than in 1980, the study found. More people are now [obese \(https://www.newsela.com/?tag=obesity\)](https://www.newsela.com/?tag=obesity) — extremely overweight. That goes for everyone — men and women, children and adults, rich and poor. The report was published in the *The Lancet*, a respected medical journal.

In 1980, 857 million people on the planet were overweight. In 2013, that number grew to 2.1 billion people.

It's not just that the global population is larger and so more people weigh too much. In 1980, about 29 men out of 100 were overweight. In 2013, almost 37 men out of 100 were overweight. The numbers were similar for women.

In 1989, 16 out of every 100 children in wealthy countries weighed too much. By 2013, that number rose to 23 children. Even in poorer countries, people were heavier. The number of overweight children rose from 8 to 13 per 100.

All over the world, as time went on people got bigger. People gained the most weight between the ages of 20 and 40.

Disease Risks

A few extra pounds may seem harmless. But it can be serious. The U.S. government warns that too much body fat increases the risk of serious diseases. They include heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancer. A 2010 study said that being overweight caused 3.4 million deaths worldwide.

For the new study, researchers looked at how much people weigh in 183 countries.

For example, more than half adults on Tonga are very overweight. Tonga is a tropical island kingdom in the Pacific. More than half of women in six other countries were obese also. The countries were Kuwait, Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, Libya, Qatar and Samoa.

The report mentioned the United States as an especially fat country. Out of 100 American men, 31 have too much body fat. For American women, it is 34 of 100. There are 671 million obese people in the world. More than 87 million of them live in the United States. That's more than any other country.

No Country Got Thinner

In 2013, most of the world's heaviest people lived in just 10 countries. These were the United States, China, India, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt, Germany, Pakistan and Indonesia.

The report found that no country actually got thinner. That was perhaps the unhappiest finding in the entire 16-page report.

Klim McPherson wondered how to get the world serious about weight gain. McPherson is a scientist at the University of Oxford in England. He thinks people should go back to weighing what they did 30 years ago.

For years, health experts have been trying to get people to stop smoking and eat heart healthy foods. Their efforts have succeeded. People aren't dying from smoking or heart disease like they used to. "Can a similar success with weight ever happen?" said McPherson.

Probably not any time soon, he admitted. Experts have a good idea of what needs to be done. People need to eat — and buy — less food. But there is simply no public interest to make big changes, he said.

Quiz

- 1 According to the article, why is it hard to stop the rise in weight gain?
 - (A) People have no interest in changing things.
 - (B) There are no health risks associated with weight.
 - (C) There is an excess of food available in the markets.
 - (D) Most people in developing countries have no healthcare.

- 2 Select the paragraph from the first section of the article that describes the rise in overweight children in rich as well as poor countries.

- 3 Out of 100, how many American women have too much body fat?
 - (A) 23
 - (B) 31
 - (C) 34
 - (D) 37

- 4 According to the article, the following countries have more than half of their women overweight EXCEPT:
 - (A) Kuwait
 - (B) Libya
 - (C) India
 - (D) Qatar

Answer Key

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